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DEPT WHA/PDA for Chad West and WHA/CAR for Jackie Rosholt and Renee Ragin

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OEJC SCUL NS

SUBJECT: The Show Must Go On: Jones Entertains Hundreds Despite Personal Tragedy

I. (U) This cable is a program evaluation for the Performing Arts Initiative program bringing Kevin Jones to Suriname.

IA. Name of Speaker: Kevin Jones

IB. Dates of Program: July 2 - July 5 2008

IC. MSP Theme Addressed: Goal #1, mutual U.S./Suriname appreciation and respect contributing to a more effective partnership.

ID. Summary: Kevin Jones traveled to Suriname and performed for over 800 guests on the 4th of July. In addition, he met and "jammed" with local musicians twice and held an informal tutorial session with local teenagers. Unfortunately, Jones' mother fell ill just before his scheduled departure, and he delayed his departure by two days to be with her. Jones' mother died while Jones was in Suriname, forcing the cancellation of most of the other events on his schedule. However, Jones went ahead with four other scheduled events before departing for the United States literally a few hours after his last performance: a joint appearance with 23 Surinamese colleagues for an audience of over 800.

IE. Audience reached and size: Jones reached audience members from all levels of Surinamese society, and from all age groups from teens to senior citizens. From his small-group session chatting about music with local teens, to his performance for hundreds of guests including Vice President of Suriname Ramdien Sardjoe, Kevin maintained his professionalism despite his personal loss. The Embassy was very grateful to Kevin for his choice to go through with his commitment to perform for a large and diverse audience of over 800 on the 4th of July, and to interact with three smaller, more personal groups of between five and twenty-five individuals.

IF. Effectiveness of the performer in communicating intended messages to target audience: Selected not only for his musical talent but also for his personality, charm, and teaching skills, Jones came through on all counts. Thrust into a group of twenty-three percussionists with whom he had never played and asked to be the "center piece," Kevin's skills were evident as he performed front and center during the concert, and also performed multiple duets with members of the band, thereby putting an exclamation point behind Post's intended message of diverse cultures and nations working together in unison. In the small group session, Kevin demonstrated his personal charm and teaching instincts by within minutes coaxing a group of initially hesitant teenagers to laugh and chat freely with him. We would love to bring Kevin again, and recommend him to other Posts.

IG. Type and Quality of Department support: Post is very grateful to Chad West of WHA/PDA for his assistance in putting this program together, and very pleased to have been selected for this programming, which was key to our ongoing message.

IH. Impact: For nearly two years, Post has sought to underline the message that the United States shares much with Suriname, including cultural diversity, and that the "many faces" of the United States

include an enormous wealth of expertise and cultural inheritance that many foreign audiences would not immediately recognize as stereotypically "American." Jones understood this message immediately and fit himself into the execution perfectly. The "hot wash" consensus from Post staff on Kevin's performance was that many of those who attended his performance enjoyed it because it was "something different" -- exactly the point. Thus, through Jones' interactions with everyone from the movers and shakers of Surinamese society to young people and musicians, the Embassy was able to cement its reputation -- and by extension the reputation of the United States -- for performance excellence, inclusivity, and diversity.

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